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ABSTRACT

A report is given of the development in Australia of telephone tutorials for small group instruction of isolated students with and without the assistance of loudspeaking telephones. The following topics are covered: (1) why use telephone tutorials; (2) location of telephone tutorial centers; (3) equipment; (4) unit and staff selection; (5) pilot sessions--spring 1982; (6) students' evaluations; (7) lecturers' opinions; (8) costs; and (9) technical problems. A discussion is presented on the strengths and weaknesses of the pilot program, and proposals are made for further trials and extension of services. A feedback form used in the program is appended, as well as a senior research officer's evaluation of students' comments. (JD)

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TELEPHONE TUTORIALS
Report of a Pilot Scheme

Spring Semester 1982

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MITCHELL
Division of External Studies and Continuing Education
Bathurst NSW

SP 025 085

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared for the Principal's Advisory Committee which commissioned the Division of External Studies and Continuing Education to conduct the first study of telephone tutorials for the College's external students.

The first series of tutorials was held during Spring Semester, 1982.

My appreciation is expressed to the College lecturers, named throughout the report, for their willingness to take part in the trials, and to the College's Senior Research Officer, Tim Fishburn, for his assistance in evaluating the opinions of the students who participated.

I also acknowledge the assistance offered by Mr. T. Cavanagh, Officer-in-Charge, Outreach, Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education, Toowoomba, Queensland for the advice offered in the preliminary stages of the trials.

Acknowledgement is made to the British Open University for the guidance contained in its publication "Tutoring by Telephone - A Handbook", most of which proved to be particularly relevant to local conditions, and certainly saved much time and effort, and avoided the necessity for staff at this College to "re-invent the wheel".

L.E. SISLEY
Acting Director
DIVISION OF EXTERNAL STUDIES
AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

Bathurst
March, 1983

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INTRODUCTION

Arising from the Registrar's and the Head of the Division of External Studies report of 24/7/1981 --Telephone Tutorials-- the Principal's Advisory Committee agreed as follows:

(b) Proposal for Telephone Tutorial Study Centres

Tabled were

(i) a paper from Darling Downs Institute explaining the operation of its Student Centres and telephone tutorials for external students; and

(ii) a paper from the Registrar and Mr. Hague outlining the outcome of their investigation of the Darling Downs Institute model; the establishment ($2,900) and annual recurrent ($4,540) costs of setting up and operating five selected centres for external students of the College; and the advantages which could be expected to accrue to the College from study centres in the areas of establishing a College "presence" and of minimising attrition rates in introductory units.

After a discussion of the staffing and funding implications of the proposal, it was agreed that:

(i) the Committee adopt the recommendation that the College undertake a pilot evaluation of study centres in 1982 based on the telephone conference methodology for five centres - two country and three metropolitan; and

(ii) Directors and staff become involved in identifying units suitable for the pilot exercise."

In February, 1982, the Head of the Division of External Studies handed the project to me for implementation in terms of the above report.

A copy of a report compiled by Mr. T. Cavanagh, Officer-in-Charge, Outreach, Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education, Toowoomba, which provided an outline of that Institution's experience with telephone tutorials, was obtained. Further telephone discussions were held with Mr. Cavanagh to clarify a number of points relating to procedures, type of equipment used, and costs.

I also had discussions with staff at the University of New England and Macquarie University but none had had any experience with D.D.I.A.E.'s particular mode of academic communication with their external students. Thus our trial was based purely on the D.D.I.A.E. model, and the information contained in literature supplied by the Open University. Although various reports exist about the use overseas of telephone tutorials, I was unable to obtain detailed

information about costs and the way in which the system operated, therefore I decided that for the purpose of the trial, we should adhere basically to the D.D.I.A.E. model, and adapt it to suit our circumstances.

WHY USE TELEPHONE TUTORIALS ?

Where face-to-face tutoring is impossible or difficult for a number of reasons, tutoring by telephone can offer an alternative and convenient means of direct communication between a lecturer and his students, before and after a residential school.

PROBLEMS OF DISTANCE

As you will know, although some students have access to tutorials and counselling support, the use some students can make of these services may be affected by the distance they live from their lecturer or a week-end study centre.

ISOLATION THROUGH PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Students in more densely-populated areas may be just as isolated from academic support for different kinds of reasons. They may be unable to travel because of work and personal circumstances, such as being house-bound through illness or family ties and problems, or disabled or on shift work. For many of these students, the only alternative to telephone tuition is correspondence with the tutor. Many are also isolated from contact with fellow students.

GROUP TUTORIALS BY TELEPHONE

There are two main methods of holding a group tutorial by telephone, i.e. without or with the assistance or LOUDSPEAKING TELEPHONES.

Loudspeaking telephones amplify the incoming sound and have a microphone built into the equipment to allow people to speak back without the use of a handset. Loudspeaking telephones thus have the advantage of leaving the hands free and enabling a group of users to sit around a single telephone speaker. Examples of the use of LST's are:

FOR ISOLATED COUNTRY STUDENTS

A CONFERENCE CALL (see Fig. 1 below)

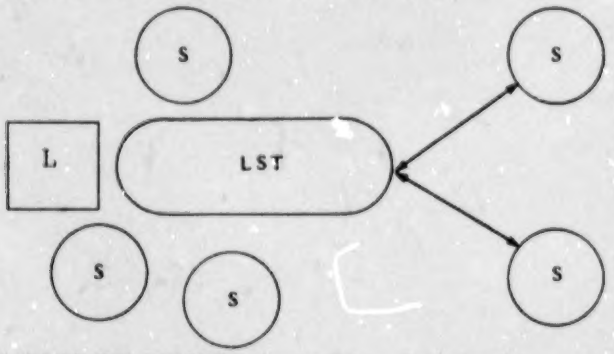
This includes several participants (a lecturer and up to nine students), each on an individual line, at home. The lines are linked together into a common network by means of a 'conference line'. This bridging is arranged by the Division of External Studies with Telecom.

FIG. 1

L = Lecturer

S = Student

LST = Loudspeaking Telephone

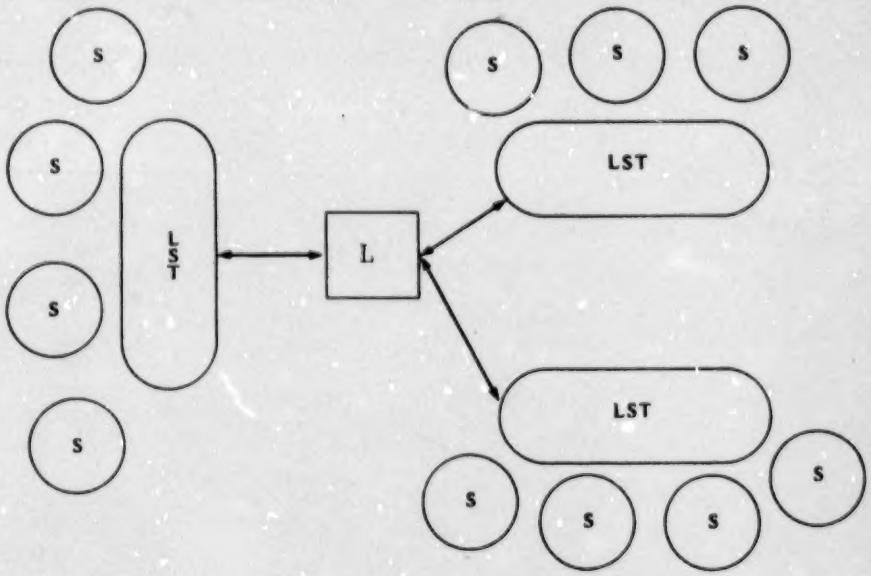


FOR ESTABLISHED TELEPHONE TUTORIAL CENTRES (at present, Macquarie University, N.S.W.I.T., Liverpool Technical College, and Dubbo)

WITH LOUDSPEAKING TELEPHONES (see Fig. 2 below)

by a tutor at the College with groups of students who meet at one or more established centres.

FIG. 2



LOCATION OF TELEPHONE TUTORIAL CENTRES

In order to determine where telephone tutorial centres should be located, so that access could be available to as many students as possible, I plotted the location of students enrolled in 10 introductory units in the Schools of Business Studies and Social Science. The results of the survey are shown in Table 1 below:

TABLE I

RESIDENTIAL LOCATION - SELECTED INTRODUCTORY UNITS

AUTUMN SEMESTER 1982

UNIT	SYDNEY (CENTRAL)	PARRAMATTA	LIVERPOOL	MACQUARIE	WAGGA	DUBBO	CANBERRA	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE OF ENROLMENT
Accounting I & Accounting IB	43	14	9	15		6	4	91	43%(210)
Introduction to Law	24	9	7	8		2	1	51	36%(143)
Microeconomics I & Economics IB	23	12	7	10	2	3		57	47%(120)
Macroeconomics I	17	6	2	5		4	5	39	45%(86)
Health Systems and Organisations	16	22	8	9		1		56	39%(144)
Business Communication	16	17	6	5	1		1	46	42%(108)
Political Studies	5	8	1	4	1	2	2	23	34%(67)
Introduction to Sociology	16	20	6	11			3	56	34%(165)
	160	108	46	67	4	18	16	419	40%(1043)

The above units were selected because of their high enrolment, high enrolments of new students, high dropout rate, and in the belief that students enrolled in these units were in most need of contact with lecturers before and after a residential school.

The locations were selected on the basis that these areas would provide sufficient students to form tutorial groups i.e. at least 10 and not more than about 15 at any one session.

All of the allocations were made on the basis of the students' addresses according to the current student list for the units. In the case of the Sydney centres, the students were allocated on the basis of their nominated suburbs and their close proximity to a proposed Sydney centre. This is not to say that they would not choose one of the others because of their work location and circumstances on the day prescribed for a tutorial, e.g. a student who lived in Guildford and who worked in Sydney may have decided to attend the Sydney centre. Without knowing where students worked, I did not include students who lived in Cronulla, and those further north, in Gosford and Richmond, who were likely to work in close proximity to one of the centres.

Thus the figures quoted were minimal on the basis of their addresses, but

could well have been much higher.

On the basis of these figures, and with only one central Sydney centre, a tutorial for Accounting I and IB would not allow for adequate lecturer participation if more than about 20 students had attended a particular tutorial session which would then have defeated its purpose. Thus, I considered that two sessions might be needed for some units. In all of the other units, while the numbers were minimal, and those who lived in the suburbs could have attended Sydney central, it is unlikely that the attendance numbers would have exceeded that which would make for a successful session. For those centres with up to 5 students in a unit e.g. Macroeconomics I and Political Studies at Liverpool, I was inclined to have only 2 sessions to start with, at Sydney Central and Liverpool. With the country centres there could have been a few more students within a 30 mile radius of Dubbo for Accounting I, Macroeconomics I and Introduction to Law. The same applied to Canberra for Accounting I but not likely for Introduction to Law, Business Communications, Political Studies and Introduction to Sociology. A similar argument existed for Wagga Wagga.

In summary therefore, it seemed to me that we could run worth-while groups in all units at Sydney central, Parramatta, Liverpool and Macquarie, with the exception of Political Studies and Macroeconomics I at Liverpool. For the country centres I thought Dubbo should be the choice, bearing in mind our commitment to open a centre there, and also to determine the quality of reception.

It also seemed to me, that because of the likely attendance numbers, it would be unwise to link Sydney central with any other centre at the same time. Care would also have been needed in making multi-links between other Sydney centres and a country centre until the numbers had been determined.

Bearing in mind that in the above units there are common enrolments, many students may have been able to obtain the benefit of two tutorial sessions in their units, e.g. Accounting I/Introduction to Law/Microeconomics I, and Health Systems and Organisation and Business Communication.

Surprisingly, I did not find high enrolments in the same units in a number of country areas based on the larger provincial cities and country towns, e.g., Newcastle, Wollongong, Canberra, Tamworth, and Wagga Wagga. Dubbo did however, reflect a slighty higher number than those towns mentioned above.

Telephone tutorial centres were eventually established as follows:

Sydney Central,(N.S.W. Institute of Technology)
Liverpool TechnicalCollege
Macquarie University
Dubbo, at the Orana Education Centre.

A centre was proposed at Parramatta or Strathfield, but I was unable to obtain a suitable venue i.e. suitable rooms, access in the evenings, close to transport and adequate parking. Therefore this proposal was abandoned.

The officers-in-charge of the established centres agreed to assist the College in providing a suitable room, chairs and tables, and also in arranging for a member of their staff to connect the equipment at each of the times appointed for the tutorials. In addition, they agreed to have someone on duty during the tutorial in the event that there were technical failures which required access to another 'phone.

EQUIPMENT

Apart from the standard telephone handset, and a venue, the only additional facility required for the trial was the provision of a loud-speaker telephone supplied by Voca Communications. The LST's were installed by Telecom in each of the four centres, with one unit being installed in Heffron Building in the room used by the lecturers conducting tutorials.

An illustration of the LST is shown in Figure 3.

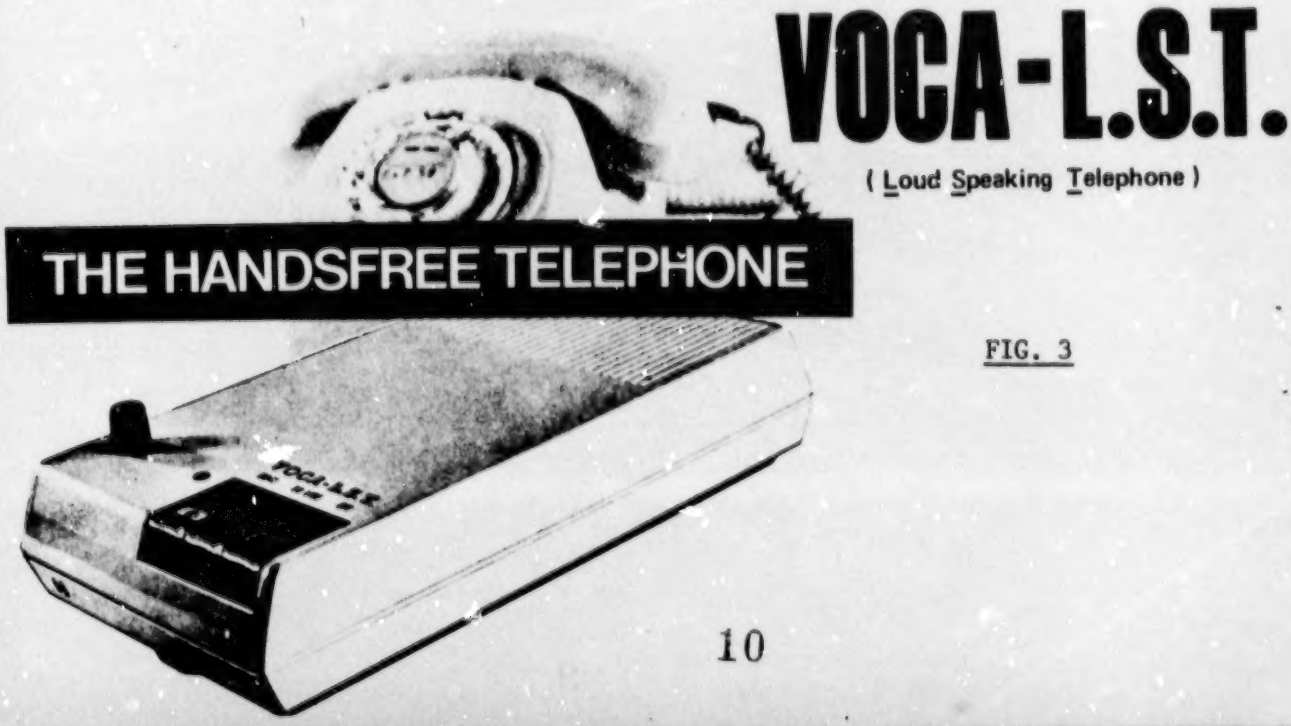


FIG. 3

While discussions commenced with Telecom and the Centres in February, 1982, the final LST was not connected, and the availability of rooms in the venues selected were not confirmed until the end of Autumn semester, 1982. In the meantime, discussions had been commenced with a number of academic staff regarding their willingness, and the suitability of their units, to participate in the trials.

UNIT AND STAFF SELECTION

During Autumn semester I canvassed at least 12 members of staff in the Schools of Business and Public Administration and Social Sciences, some of whom had expressed an interest in the proposal which had received some publicity through their respective Deans and the Academic Board. I later called a meeting of the staff lecturing in those units which had been selected for the trial. I also addressed the Board of Teacher Education, and offered to do likewise with the School of Social Sciences. Ultimately, the following 11 lecturers undertook to participate in the units named:

Mr. B. Hanley - Accounting I and IB

Mr. G. Walker - Money and Banking and Australian Financial System

Mrs. Carol Harman, Mr. R. Hill and Mr. R. Allan - Research Skills and Report Writing

Mr. D. Wyatt - Comparative Institutions

Mr. J. Burgess - Economics IB and Macroeconomics I and IIB

Mr. T. Geddes - Microeconomics II

Mr. P. Hallinan - Assessment of Children's Special Needs

At the residential schools the above lecturers and I introduced the concept of telephone tutorials to students. From this was obtained an indication of the interest and the likely attendance either at the centres or by private telephone connections from the students' homes. After this, arrangements were made with lecturers individually to determine the number, the timing and locations of their sessions. Students were then informed by letter of the details of the arrangements which had been made. As details of sessions were finalised, arrangements were made with Telecom to book conference lines and, where centres were to be used, to book rooms and for the loud-speaker-telephones to be connected on the appropriate dates. Table II summarises the units and the lecturers who participated in the trials, the number of students who indicated at the residential schools that they were interested and would participate in a particular session. The costs of the call for a particular session are also shown.

The following notes should be read in conjunction with Table II.

NOTE 1 ASSESSMENT OF CHILDRENS' SPECIAL NEEDS (Mr. P. Hallinan)

Because of the small student enrolment in the unit and that students were widely dispersed throughout the state and the Sydney area, it was not feasible to use the established centres for these students. It should also be noted that for the above reasons the lecturer did not consider it to be practical to hold weekend schools. The only way to conduct telephone tutorial sessions for this unit was by arranging for each student to be connected to the College from their private telephone by conference line, with up to nine students being linked in any one sesion. Because of their vocation or domestic circumstances some students were available only at certain times therefore the students were divided into four groups initially of 4, 3, 6 and 9 respectively. Later, and where possible, the groups were divided more evenly as students either withdrew or became unavailable for later sessions. For each session the lecturer provided advanced notice of the topics he would cover. The costs of calls varied for each group depending upon the number of students in the group, the actual length of the sessions, and because some calls extended across two cost zones.

The concept of telephone tutorials was introduced to students at the September Residential School.

The length of the session for each group varied from 25 minutes to 40 minutes each. The average call cost was of the order of $9.88 per student session.

This method of conducting a telephone tutorial would be the most expensive because:

(a) the small number of students enrolled in the unit
(b) their varied locations throughout the state
(c) they were held at times which were suitable to most students (i.e. one group of 4 students did not have a private telephone, and therefore they made use of their school telephone shortly after the school closed, at about 4 pm)
(d) they were, in effect, person-to-person calls.
(e) one session was held at a time of the day when the call charge was most expensive (i.e. week-day 4pm to 4.30pm)
(f) because it was not possible to obtain the maximum number (i.e. 9) of connections on the one conference line.

An analysis of students' and lecturer's evaluations for all sessions are shown later in the report.

NOTE 2 ACCOUNTING I AND ACCOUNTING IB (Mr. B. Hanley)

This was the first attempt at arranging a telephone tutorial for an introductory unit with a large enrolment and using only the established centres, and for a limited number of students in two groups in different parts of the state (i.e. Taree and Tumut) who could not attend a centre. The student roll indicated the following minimum number of students who lived or worked close to the established centres:

NSWIT	43
Liverpool	9
Macquarie	15
Dubbo	6

In addition, there were another 14 students who lived in the Parramatta area who could by reason of their work place or residence have attended one of the three Sydney centres.

In other words there was a possible attendance of the order of 100 students who could have attended one of the four established centres.

The lecturer, Brian Hanley, introduced the concept of telephone tutorials to all students who attended his mass lectures at the September Residential School where an indication was given that there was sufficient interest to warrant conducting sessions at all of the centres. In addition, two groups of students, about eight in each with one group centred at Taree and one at Cooma, indicated that they would participate in a session at the same time as sessions were being held at the Sydney centres. Accordingly, arrangements were made for one session to be held at the Macquarie and NSWIT centres plus one of the country groups on 26th October, and for another session to be held at the Liverpool and Dubbo centres with the other country group on the 2nd November. Thus, in the event that one date did not suit some Sydney students they could participate at one of two centres and at the later date.

In order to determine the numbers who were likely to attend at any particular centre, the students were asked to let me know which centre they would be attending, and on which date. They were supplied with a tear-off coupon and a prepaid envelope for reply purposes.

As an alternative to the written reply, students were invited to respond via the Division's Ansaphone in the event that mail deliveries had been slow,

and there was insufficient time to provide a written reply.

As indicated in Table II, 7 students participated out of a possible 130.

Three students attended at Macquarie and four at NSWIT. There was no response to the special arrangements for the groups at Cooma nad Taree.

Neither Brian Hanley nor I could account for the disappointing participation rate. Unfortunately, I did not subsequently have time to pursue a survey of students to find out what caused them to lose their interest. One thought occurred to me was that a weekend school in Sydney had been mentioned at the school, and this may have had a bearing. Another thgought was that, since nearly all of the students in this unit were enrolled for the first time, the benefit and significance of student/lecturer contact were not realised. When you consider that at least 80 of the students lived within a "bull's roar" of the established centres, the low participation rate is even more mystifying. With regard to the two country gourps, I think the fact that Mr. Hanley had undertaken to visit them in their own locality had a big bearing on their lack of interest in a voice-to-voice only contact.

The average cost per student for this session was $2.47.

NOTE 3 RESEARCH SKILLS AND REPORT WRITING (Mrs. C. Harman, Messrs. R. Hill and R. Allan)

Much the same procedure was followed as for Accounting I (see note 2), except that of 60 Justice course (policemen and corrective service officers) students addressed at the school, 42 signed a sheet indicating:

(a) they would attend a session, and
(b) nominating the centre and/or 'phone number from which they intended to participate.

The Sydney students were given a choice of the four centres, and the country students were offered the private 'phone link facility in conjunction with those attending a Sydney centre.

The following table shows the actual number of students who attended a centre or participated by private link, with the second column showing the numbers who indicated at the residential school from which particular centre they would participate:

	INTENDED PARTICIPATION	ACTUAL PARTICIPATION
Dubbo	1	Nil
Liverpool	11	7
Country Students	8	6
Macquarie	7	1
NSWIT	5	2
Country	9	4
	41	20

We were told later that there had been a function organised for Sydney policemen at Gosford on the day of the telephone tutorial, and although many had intended to return from Gosford to attend their nominated centre, it was not possible for them to do so. It is also possible that some work shifts may have been changed and this may have been responsible for some absentees. All students however had indicated at the school that provided they were given at least two weeks notice of the session, they could organise their shifts to ensure that they could participate. The notices were sent to students at least three weeks before the sessions were due to be held.

The average cost per student for this session was $5.40. It can be seen that, with a mix of roughly half attending centres and half by private telephone link with all calls being made after 6pm, the average cost per student is reduced from about $10 to about $5 per student session.

NOTE 4 MONEY AND BANKING (Mr. G. Walker)

This was a much smaller group who were enrolled in their 4/5th semester of study. In addition, they were all known to one another, either through their industry or because of contact they had had at previous residential schools over a period of 2/3 years. The lecturer is also well known to them. These ingredients, I believe, provided the motivation for a much more active participation than new students enrolled for the first time in an introductory unit. Again, because of the individual links by private 'phone and the small number participating at one time, the average cost per student/session was $7.71.

NOTE 5 ECONOMICS IB (Mr. G. Walker)

Although these are fairly new students, they were obviously a small group

and much of the comment made in note 5 above applies in this case. The average cost per student session was higher than usual because the sessions tended to be much longer, and with fewer students participating they tended to be keen to spend more time in discussion.

NOTE 6 AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL SYSTEMS (Mr. G. Walker)

This is an advanced unti in the Banking and Finance course and all of the comments in Note 4 above apply in this case. The average cost per student for a 1½ hour session was $19.60.

NOTE 7 MICROECONOMICS (Mr. T. Geddes)

The responses to this session were very disappointing since about half the students enrolled were close to a centre, and provision was made for country students to be linked by their private telphones to a city centre also. The concept had been introduced at the residential schools, and students were given a month in which to nominate from a choice of two sessions which were planned on two different dates.

The average cost of a mix of three centres and three private links, was $8 per student/session.

NOTE 8 MACROECONOMICS I AND ECONOMICS IB (Mr. J. Burgess)

Of the 104 students enrolled in these units, 54 students indicated to the lecturer at the residential school that they would be interested in attending telephone tutorial sessions. Further, 45 students nominated the centre at which they would attend, the other 9 country students each nominating a private telephone link. Since the interest was so great it was decided to run two sessions on two different dates,two days apart.

The bracketed figures in Table II show the number of students who participated in each session. Of the 45 who nominated a city centre at the residential school, only 7 attended while all 9 country students participated by a link to their private telephones. Overall, there was a marked absence as against stated intentions from the city based students. What made the response so disappointing was that Mr. Burgess went to a lot of trouble to set-out topics for discussion at the sessions which were sent to students 2½ weeks before the first session was due to take place. We are aware that introductory economics has always had a high wastage rate, but in this case the residential

school was held early in the semester, in September, and the telephone tutorials were timed for about the half-way mark about six weeks after the residential school and six weeks before the examination.

The average call cost per student/session waas $9.36.

NOTE 9 COMPARATIVE INSTITUTIONS (Dr. D. Wyatt)

The responses to Dr. Wyatt's introduction at the residential school showed that it would be well worthwhile to organise two sessions in two of the three Sydney centres and at Dubbo. In addition, provision was made for students who lived inthe Bathurst District to attend at Mitchell and participate with the lecturer from the transmitting point. Of the 117 students enrolled, the maximum participation at the four centres was expected to be about 15 students. With such a high response from the city students it was not considered possible to conduct two very large groups of up to 30 students, and this was pointed out and accepted at the residential school. A request for one of the sessions to be held on a Saturday morning was also accepted and was duly arranged.

As Table II shows, 5 students participated at two centres, 2 came to Bathurst and sat-in with the lecturer at the College, and there was one private link. At the second session, 2 students participated, both of whom were at Liverpool.

There was no response from the other centre, and only 1 student who lived at Wellington and who was to have attended at the Dubbo centre, was subsequently linked to her private telephone.

In total, 9 students out of 117 students participated.

The point should be made that at the residential school, and at the time the notice of the telephone tutorial was sent to students, they were informed that a voluntary weekend school would be held late November. Again, one finds it difficult to understand the loss of fervour on the part of the students, especially since by that time all night rugby league and week-end finals had been played, and the test and one-day cricket matches had not commenced!

In view of the small number at each session, Dr. Wyatt spent more time with the students than was planned, and therefore, they proved to be the most expensive at $20 per student/session.

STUDENTS' EVALUATION OF TELEPHONE TUTORIALS

All students who participated in a telephone tutorial were requested to complete a brief evaluation sheet as soon as possible after the conclusion of the session and to return it to the College. A reply paid College-addressed envelope was provided for this purpose. A copy of the evaluation sheet is attached in Appendix I.

A completed evaluation sheet was requested from every student for each session attended. Thus, in some cases, students participated in different sessions in the same unit. In other cases, some students participated in different sessions which were held for different units. Students in the latter case therefore had the experience of different approaches by different lecturers.

In all, 25 sessions were held for 10 units in which 147 students participated. In one unit, Assessment of Children's Special Needs, three different sessions were held for four different groups of students.

85 evaluation sheets were returned, which represents a response rate of 61.1%.

In the first question students were asked to state their overall reaction to the session on a scale 1 (extremely unfavourable) to 5 (extremely favourable). Table III sets out students' reactions in the unit(s) in which they participated.

TABLE III

	Extremely unfavourable--------extremely favourable					
	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL
Assessing Children's Special Needs		1	6	12	28	47
*Accounting I and IB			4	1	1	6
Money and Banking				1	2	3
Economics IB			3			3
Australian Financial System					4	4
Microeconomics II		1			1	2
*Macroeconomics I and Economics IIB		1		6	1	8
*Comparative Institutions				1	1	2
*Research Skills and Report Writing			1	5	4	10

1. 47 of the 88 were from the same students in the same unit who participated in three sessions in roughly the same four groups with the same lecturer conducting each session. Different topics were set for each of the three sessions. The unit is compulsory, taken in the second semester in the Diploma in Special Education course. To gain admission to the course students must be 2-years trained teachers, and they must be in full-time or part-time employment in a teaching position. All students would have attended residential schools prior to the commencement of their telephone tutorials. This group, in my view, was able to make a better judgement of a new teaching mode than their collegues in other units. They were all isolated, in the sense that they were resident throughout the state. 16 of the 22 lived in country areas, the others being dispersed throughout the Sydney metropolitan area. Two students were husband and wife living together. During the course of the trials, two students withdrew, and two others were not available at the second or third sessions because of other commitments at the time.

Those units in Table II marked thus * indicate that the unit is an introductory one in which nearly all students were enrolled for the first time, Spring semester, most of whom would have embarked on tertiary studies for the first time. Very few students would have had previous experience of study in the external mode.

In the remaining four units all students were at varying levels of their courses.

Forty two (equivalent to 47.7%) of all respondents considered their session(s) extremely favourable, while twenty six (equivalent to 29.5%) expressed minor reservations. Fourteen (equivalent to 15.9%) were not enamoured with their experience, while three (equivalent to 3.4%) expressed an unfavourable view.

STRENGTHS

In this question students were asked to express their opinion as to what they though were the strengths of their sessions.

With the exception of three students, the overall comments where positive, enthusiastic and encouraging, and their comments may be summarised as follows:

> "An opportunity was available to ask questions and resolve problems in conjunction with lecturers and students"

"Discussion with other students and lecturers was extremely beneficial".

"Additional and personal guidance was available from the lecturer at an important time in the semester".

"Removed the sense of isolation".

"Realisation that help is only a 'phone call away, instead of struggling alone".

"An opportunity was available to discuss questions which had arisen from out of the texts and/or the marked assignments or dealing with questions arising in the current assignment which had not yet been submitted".

"Provided additional motivation to remain enrolled".

"Created a lecture room situation almost as good as face-to-face lectures".

"Travelling time - zero".

"Instant feed-back on the questions posed by other students".

WEAKNESSES

In this question students were asked to state what they thought were the weaknesses in their particular session(s). Forty eight (equivalent to 54.5%) of the respondents experienced some difficulty with the quality of sound at some stage of their sessions.

In the main the problems were confined to the poor quality of the sound, and in voice fading. This question is dealt with in some detail later in the report.

There were a few occasions when there were late connections. Where the line was so poor Telecom was requested to re-connect the speakers to see if a better line could be found. Generally, not a great deal of improvement was obtained with a new line.

The other weaknesses are listed below. Unless otherwise stated it is the view of only one student.

"Too many in group" (2 respondents)

- Comment: there were nine (the maximum) in this group, which was later reduced to seven.

"Situation felt strange - no visual cues"

"Questions not prepared by lecturer"

- Comment: students were informed that this session was to comprise questions and answers only.

"Without a Blackboard, some of the explanations were hard to follow"

- Comment: This was a session for Accounting I students.

"Lecturer spoke to quickly"

- Comment: This was especially noticeable for the first session but was usually corrected once students realized that they had to rely on oral cues rather than visual cues.

"Groups too small" (4)

"Late receipt of discussion topics" (3)

- Comment: In all of these cases written discussion topics were posted to students some four weeks before the sessions were due to be held.

"More cueing need to be given by lecturers"

- Comment: This was a common feature, particularly in the first sessions that were held.

"Sessions not long enough"

- Comment: The length of each time was specified. In some cases, it was not possible to extend the session, either because we had organised one session to follow another, or because the conference line had been booked by another party. It is difficult to be precise, at this stage, as to the ideal length of a session partly because we are not able to determine how many students will participate, and it is not easy to judge the degree of difficulty which each student in a group is encountering. In general, once students and lecturers became familiar with the procedures there is a tendency for lecturers and students to become somewhat garrulous. I put this latter comment down to enthusiasm.

"Students unprepared for the session":

- Comment: This was a common observation by lecturers and LES.

- Comment: Students were repeatedly invited to stop the lecturer in order to obtain clarification of a particular point.

The sound quality apart, most of the students' points can be overcome with more experience of lecturers in using the medium. The most suitable size for a group is not easy to establish, partly because we can never be sure (where sessions are at centres) how many students are going to participate. The only time that group size can be controlled is when there is a pre-determined private link and students are allocated to groups. Here again, we found on some occasions that a group of three or four students was of little value, whereas the larger groups seemed to interact much better between themselves and the lecturers.

We did notice that where students in a group knew one another, there was a much better flow of discussion and students tended to "carry" the discussion rather than leaving it all to the lecturer. This was most noticeable particularly with students in the advanced units who had attended residential schools and/or were known to one another through their vocations. i.e. teachers, bank officers, etc.

It think it goes without saying that in a subject like Accounting I, an example written on a blackboard can be much more readily understood than an example given via the telephone, this applies particularly, of course, to new students. In this case I attended the sessions at the NSWIT centre, and I could readily understand the students' problems.

IMPROVEMENTS

In this question students were asked to suggest how future sessions could be improved.

Thirty five of the respondents made no comment in this section.
Eleven respondents requested improvements in the quality of sound.
Nine respondents would have preferred to have had discussion topics
Comment: There were three units in which no discussion topics were prepared by the lecturers and forwarded to the students prior to the session.
Longer and more frequent sessions.
More questions should be asked by students.
More centres should be established.
Students should be well prepared for their session.

Lecturers should only concentrate on one or two topics, rather than covering too much ground.

OTHER COMMENTS, CRITICISMS, SUGGESTIONS

In thirty two cases the respondents had no comment to make in this section.

The other comments offered by students are summarised below:

"Sessions are a great benefit to students"
"An excellent beginning - hope they continue"
"Exercise was very worthwhile"
"Larger loudspeakers are necessary"
"These tutorials were of more benefit than a great deal of what goes on at residential school"
"Hope to see these sessions extended to other units"
"These sessions would be a big help to students in first semester units, especially those who have lost confidence in returning to study"
"Sessions could be taped by students"
"Dinner went cold"
"Felt students should have met in a classroom prior to a session to ensure fuller participation"
"Would welcome a session before each assignment"
"A step in the right direction for country students"
"The tutorials were well placed after assignments had been completed and before the examinations, which allows time for revision"

The Senior Research Officer, Mr. Tim Fishburn, has prepared a detailed students' evaluation for each unit, and these are included in Appendix II

LECTURERS' OPINIONS

At the conclusion of all of the sessions, I requested each lecturer who participated to let me have their comments about their experiences. So far, I have received reports from four lecturers which, I think, embrace most of the comments made by other lecturers at the time of their sessions.

MR. P. HALLINAN - ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN'S SPECIAL NEEDS

"Preliminary discussions were held during the Spring Residential School. Of the twenty three students in the unit, one chose not to participate,

TABLE II

Date of Tutorial	Unit	Lecturer	No. Enrolled in unit	Interest Reg'd at Res. Sch	Mode of Participation: Centre	Mode of Participation: Private	Number Participating	No. Of Sessions	Call Costs	Comment
27/28 Sept	Ass't of Childrens' Special Needs	P. Hallinan	23	22	—	22	22	4 groups	$ 200)	
18/19 Oct	"	"	"	"	—	21	21	4 "	241)	See Note
1/2 Nov	"	"	"	"	—	18	18	4 "	162)	
26 Oct	Acc I & IB	B. Hanley	130	100	Macq 3 NSWIT 4	—	7	1 sess.	18	See Note
1 Nov	Res. Skills and Report Writing	Carol Harman R.Hill, R.Allan	60	40)	Dubbo (-) L'pool(7)	6	13			
				)	Macq (1) NSWIT (2)	4	7	1	108	See Note
10 Nov	Money & Banking	G. Walker	8	8)	—	6	6	1	108	See Note
24 Nov	"	"	8	8)	—	8	8	1		
10 Nov	Economics IB	"	8	3)	—	3	3	1	95	See Note
24 Nov	"	"	8	3)	—	3	3	1		
17 Nov	Aust. Fin. System	"	7	5	—	5	5	1	9[illegible]	See Note
24 Nov	Microeconomics II	T. Geddes	40	high)	Macq (3) NSWIT(2) Dubbo(1)	3	9	1	73	See Note
9/11 Nov	Macroeconomics I & Economics IIB	J. Burgess "	104	54)	Macq (2) Dubbo(1)	5	8	1	103	See Note
					L'pool(2) NSWIT(2)	4	8	1		
20 Nov	Comparative Institutions	D. Wyatt	117	see Note 9	L'pool(1) NSWIT(2) MCAE (2)	1	6	1	108	See Note
					L'pool(2)	1	3	1		
	10 units	9 lecturers			37	110	147	25	$1386	

Average cost per student session = $ 9.62
Average cost per session = $ 56.00

for reasons unknown. Of the twenty two who took part, one studen withdrew, for personal reasons unconnected with the unit.

In all, three conferences were held, arranged about one week before due posting dates, with four separate groups - a total of twelve calls.

The remainder of this report will follow the format adopted by the student feedback form.

OVERALL EVALUATION

My overall evaluation is very favourable, both in terms of the extra teaching opportunities afforded, and in terms of extra-curricular factors, such as developing increased student confidence and a closer relationship between lecturer and student. There are technical problems over line quality on some occasions which bear continuing attention, but these are not sufficient to detract from the importance of continuing this new teaching initiative next year.

STRENGTHS OF THE APPROACH

* Students are more task-focused, this being reflected in an increased quality of assignment.
* Student doubts or queries are clarified early enough to avoid major problems in assignments.
* Student self-confidence becomes greater.
* Group morale is increased, especially if students are given opportunity to talk with each other within the group.
* Lecturer is more in tune with concerns of group as a whole. Typically, I would tend to rely on student initiative to make contact on an individual basis. This is costly in time, as often one student can express the concern of several, and this can be dealt with more economically on a group basis.
* Potential problems get sorted out quickly, and at an earlier stage. E.g., a missing page, vital to assignment completion, was able to be sent out to all students in sufficient time to avoid major worries.
* Creative problem solving opportunities are enhanced. I certainly don't have all the answers, and there were occasions when elegant solutions were offered by other students within the group.

* Mitchell depends heavily on its external students. This approach demonstrates pastoral care in action - student feedback leaves no doubt about their appreciation of this. Such appreciation must have an important "spin'off" effect in terms of attracting future students.

LIMITATIONS

To the writer the limitations appeared almost solely technical ones, viz.

1. Delays in commencing calls. On one occasion, the Trunks Supervisor informed me candidly that my previously booked call could be delayed 15-20 mins., due to a previous call going over time. "Telecom need the revenue". This isn't really good enough, particularly where subsequent bookings are also affected.
2. Line fading. This was the single major irritant. When lines faded at the outset, we were sometimes able to reconnect satisfactorily, although on other occasions, they faded again after a few moments. The fading was often intermittent and sporadic, which added to the confusion of trying to decide whether to persevere with the line or not. On some occasions, another student was able to act as a relay station, but this is not really satisfactory. To quote one student: "I could only hear half the time..."

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

Continuing discussion with Telecom over the technical difficulties outlined above.

OTHER COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS

1. I am inclined to suggest that a formula be devised to allow extra loading for staff who undertake this approach in particular units. I gave up a small part of three evenings, and a major part of another three evenings, to take part in this trial. I am inclined to believe that evening calls will be the most popular time for students, in terms of freedom from work and domestic pressures.

2. Support from staff members of the Division of External Studies

was welcomed, valued, and should be continued, particularly in the event of unusual happenings, independent telephoning opportunities, negotiations with Telecom, and so forth.

3. The above discussion relates solely to telephone tutorials with students generally at their home, and not at conference study centres. Informal comment suggests that the above approach may attract higher rates of participation than the study centre.

4. I am inclined towards the view that the telephone tutorial is more effective with highly structured units. I do not necessarily see such tutorials as essential for all untis. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to contrast student retention rates, and grades, with units which do not offer such tutorials, although there are obvious other problems in doing this, e.g. Hawthorne effect.

5. I believe telephone tutorials should become an accepted part of external teaching policy in this College."

MR. G. WALKER

"1. Poor quality equipment at our end
2. Need to monitor lines to pick up drop outs
(I lost one student for 15 mins. before I picked him up)
3. 1st semester students found it difficult. These units are often more text book/exercise oriented rather than discussion oriented and hence difficult to operate telephone tutorials. Also less experienced/mature students do not contribute.
4. For mature students in advanced units the tutorials work well. Students do contribute if given sufficient time and guidelines to prepare.

Overall - technical - quality of equipment is poor!
- teaching - not for first semester students
- good possibilities for advanced units and mature students with small numbers."

I am not yet convinced that Mr. Walker's comments "about the quality of the equipment"a is correct. As I have said, the trials (which did not involve students) which we conducted between the centres were faultless. Indeed, the voices at all five centres could be heard clearly and distinctly at least twelve to fifteen feet away from the respective loud-speaker-

telephones. Thus, it seems to me, that the problems lie chiefly in the quality of the lines that are available at the time a particular call is connected. Nevertheless, the point that we have all made about sound quality needs further investigation, either with different equipment or with Telecom and Voca Communications, before we can say irrevocably that the sound quality is acceptable to both lecturers and students.

Mrs. C. Harman

1. "Strengths -
   Reassuring for students who had problems
   Gave students an opportunity to communicate with each other before and after the session.

2. Weaknesses -
   a) Organisation - we should have given the students a set programme beforehand e.g. 10 minutes for X, 15 minutes for Y etc.
   b) Timing - too late in second semester for a useful session for 31.403.
   c) Sound - too low for the students to hear.

Mr. J. Burgess

1) Participation rate disappointing
2) Requires thorough preparation by students
3) Not as effective a teaching medium as weekend schools
4) Few non-Sydney students participated (contrary to expectations)
5) Direct 'phone contact with lecturer the easiest method of rectifying study problems
6) Did not contribute much beyond existing mediums - course notes, assignment comments, 'phone conversations, weekend school, residential school.

COSTS

The Principal's Advisory Committee allocated a budget of $4,400 for the trialling of telephone tutorials in Spring semester 1982.

I set out below the costs incurred in establishing, running and maintaining all the sessions listed in Table II:

	$
6 Loud-Speaker-Telephones @ $301 each	1806
Telecom LST connection fees	276
Telecom rental fees	120
Call charges (which include call connection fees and fixed time fees)	1450
Travel (Staff to centres)	14
Overtime for M.C. Staff-Session monitor	200
Liverpool centre - 'phone rental	72
NSWIT " " "	72
Macquarie Centre Supervisor	65
Liverpool " "	46
Total	$4121

No charges were included for Mr. Sisley's time spent in organising the sessions and in monitoring most sessions.

From the information which we have collated from the Spring semester trials we will be able to establish approximate costs for each kind of session which is organised in the future.

I should make the point that, originally, the Principal's Advisory Committee intended that the cost of the trial should be paid from the College's recurrent funds. Later, it was agreed that the cost of the trials should be a charge against the 1982 Temporary Development Fund.

TECHNICAL PROBLEMS

As indicated in the comments from students and lecturers, the most common problem which occurred on some occasions was the quality of sound available to both students and lecturers.

As you can see from Table II there were various forms in which a tutorial could be held. The quality of sound problem was not peculiar to one particular mode.

I have had a number of discussions with Telecom and Voca Communications, the supplier of the loud-speaker telephones, and no satisfactory explanation has been forthcoming at this stage. In essence, neither I nor Telecom can guarantee that every session will have a sound quality comparable with that that is experienced with a normal telephone conversation.

On a number of occasions when "voice fading" occurred, or when there was obviously a "bad line", Telecom connected us to another trunk line in the expectation that the fault would be corrected. It is interesting to note that the report of the exercise compiled by Mr. Cavanagh at the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education, Toowoomba, suggested that no more than five connections be made at the one time, and even then it was expected that some fading could occur.

In our experience, even with only three connections, we experienced problems only on some occasions.

In a discussion with a private organisation, which had used a similar system to ours, they had experienced similar problems and they had reached the same conclusions that I had. i.e., the more lines that are connected at the one time there is likely to be a reduction in power through the system. Telecom has assured me that this cannot happen, although they do concede that there is a variation in the quality of sound through different lines. Unfortunately, it is not technically possible to ensure that the "same good lines" can be used on each occasion. On balance, it seemed that the best and most consistent reception was where there were private links, and this was substantiated in Mr. Hallinan's unit where there were four groups linked, each of which used the same 'phone numbers on three separate occasions. The size of the groups varied from four to nine (maximum). When, however, LST's only were used or, where there was a combination of LST's and private links, there was a considerable variation in the quality of sound on some occasions. In most cases, the sound quality was generally acceptable, but on a few occasions fade-out contributed to frustration on the part of the students and the lecturers. The LST equipment has been approved by Telecom, and the suppliers have assured me that the LST's are capable of doing the job for which they were designed. Likewise, Telecom have assured me that there is nothing wrong with their lines.

I propose to have further discussions with Telecom engineers in Sydney shortly.

In the meantime, the manager of Voca Communications who has given our particular problems detailed consideration, has informed me that Hospital Corporation of Australia, (which manages a number of private hospitals) organises consultation and lecture sessions among its staff located in several capital cities Newcastle and Orange. The purpose of their

system is identical to ours and, after consulting with Voca, they installed equipment known as "call diverters" and a loud-speaker-telephone into each installation. Deatils of that system are given below:

"This system has recently been installed into Hospital Corporation's operations and this allows their Head Office to link up with all their Private Hospitals Chief Executives and perform a conference over the Telecom Australia network.

1. SYSTEM

Consists of Call Diverters (Diplomat model) RVA modifications (free of charge) and LST being installed into every location.
System is installed onto one (1) direct line and one (1) P.A.B.X. Extension.

2. OPERATION

2.1 Head Office acts as a central location and dials on the outgoing line and connects designated connections in one direction.

2.2 It then dials out on the incoming line in the opposite direction linking up those designated connections.

2.3 Once all connections are linked then the central diverter is connected manually.

2.4 This then allows all connections to be available in a conference facility of which an LST is used to give two-way loud-speaking.

3. TELECOM

This system does not use the Telecom conference facility available through their Trunk Line network. It gives the user the benefit of utilizing STD facilities, which enables you to conduct the operation at your convenience rather than at Telecom's.

4. GENERAL

4.1 Attached are the operating instructions submitted to Hospital Corporations.

4.2 For this system to operate a pre-determined time must be co-ordinated in each location.

4.3 This system is offered to your organisation for consideration and if it solves your problem would appreciate the opportunity of discussing further.

4.4 Also attached is the brochure covering the AKTAFONE Diplomat Call Converter."

I have arranged to participate in a trial link of all of their branches.

The cost of diverters are of the order of $828 each, and I suggest that we install two of these, one at Macquarie and one at Mitchell College. I have chosen Macquarie simply because it was at that centre that most of the problems of sound quality occurred. Since least of our problems occurred with the other three centres and the private links, it would mean that we could continue with the tutorials at all centres using different equipment and to see which of it gives the best results. The diverter cannot be used with private telephone links.

A factor which is of significance is that in using a diverter there will be a saving in some call costs because calls can be linked through the STD system.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The trial was a success in terms of the number of staff and students who participated in the various modes of tutorials that were conducted, and organisationally.

2. The students who participated generally responded enthusiastically, albeit with some reservations about the quality of sound.

3. It was disappointing that so few of the first semester students in the Sydney area, for whom it was believed the sessions would be of most value, participated. The response from country students however was certainly positive.

4. The most successful sessions, in terms of student participation, were those where the lecturers prepared and distributed specific topics for discussion.

5. I am not in a position to say whether the exercise could be considered to be cheap or expensive. Clearly, the call costs to country students, linked via their private telephones, were higher than those for the students who participated at the city centres, but as with all long distance calls, distance is the determining factor. Country students are, however, isolated from their city counterparts in

terms of their ability and costs in travelling to weekend schools and access to libraries. Very, very few enjoy the luxury of being able to discuss their problems with other students, except at residential schools.

6. It will take considerably more research, and longer term conduct of telephone tutorials, in order to determine if the medium will contribute to a reduction in student wasteage.

7. When planning a tutorial for a unit with a large enrolment, thought needs to be given to group size so that the lecturer can give adequate time to the subject matter, and to allow students an adequate opportunity to participate.

8. The first occasion on which a tutorial is being conducted with students, more time needs to be given to allow students to "socialize", so that any apprehensions about using the medium can be overcome.

9. A tutorial seems to "flow" much more readily after students and/or lecturers have had some previous contact, e.g. at a residential or a week-end school.

10. There are obvious difficulties particularly for students new to the external mode, in conducting tutorials which require some illustration of questions and answers, e.g. accounting, (evidence from the Open University however indicates that tutorials in these subjects have been successful).

11. Consideration needs to be given by lecturers as to the timing of sessions, e.g. prior to the submission date of an assignment, exam. period, etc.

12. It is possible that, in future, if the medium were to become accepted as a teaching strategy, telephone tutorials might in time replace the need for residential schools in some units.

PROPOSALS FOR 1983

Recommendations

1. that further telephone tutorial trials be conducted in 1983
2. that additional country centres be established where there appears

to be an appropriate number of students which would justify their establishment. e.g. Campbelltown, Newcastle, Canberra

3. that a trial be made at the Macquarie centre and Mitchell College with the installation of diverter equipment as additions to the loud-speaker-telephones in order to improve the quality of reception. In the meanwhile, Mr. Sisley continue with his discussions with Telecom and Voca Communications and any other company which manufactures loud-speaker-telephones, e.g., G.E.C, with a view to resolving the sound problems.
4. that a budget based on the estimates below be aproved as a charge against the Development Fund, or any grant that the Federal Department of Education Technology Committee might aprpove or Mitchell College Recurrent funds.
5. that lecturers in those schools teaching external units be encouraged to continue participation in offering telephone tutorials to their students.

BUDGET 1983

	$
2 diverters, or 4 alternative model LST speakers	1700
Call costs	4000
Telecom connection fees	200
Telephone rental	200
Centre Supervisors	300
Travel	100
	$6500

APPENDIX I

EXAMPLE OF A FEEDBACK FORM FOR TUTOR USE

Name: ..... (optional) Date of tutorial: .....

Tutor: .....

1. What is your overall reaction to this session? (Circle one number)

1	2	3	4	5
extremely unfavourable				extremely favourable

2. What do you think were the WEAKNESSES in this session?

3. What do you think were the STRENGTHS in this session?

4. How would you suggest the next session be improved?

5. Other comments, criticisms, suggestions:

(With acknowledgement to The Open University -

"Tutoring by Telephone - A Handbook"

CODING RESPONSES

Note that these summary data are not presented in the same order as posed in the questionaire: STRENGTHS replaces WEAKNESSES in order.

Responses are best read in the tutorial context, where peculiar aspects of preparation, technical difficulties, teaching size and group size, inter alia, appear to be markedly influence the comments offered .. at least in the case of certain tutorials.

STRENGTHS

Responses tended to gravitate about the following:

- the tutorial method;
- contact with lecturer/tutor and/or students;
- clarification or resolution of problems;
- the timing of the tutorial(s); and
- the motivating element.

Other comments made that fall outside these cateogries were small in number.

WEAKNESSES

Generally, the following were appropriate divisions of the responses:

- technical difficulties;
- the telephone medium;
- the lecturer/tutor (session format; topic(s) or subject area(s); discussion material; questioning; cueing; and speech);
- the student's preparation .. or lack of;
- group size; and
- the duration of the session.

IMPROVEMENTS

Often comments made under this heading were mere repetition or reinforcement of earlier points made, generally 'weaknesses'; such points being raised by the individual respondent or others from the group.

However, it did allow for suggestions such as locations for further schools.

OTHER COMMENTS

As 'improvements'.

SUMMARY COMMENT

Technical difficulties aside, and taking care in drawing such overall

responses, it may be said that these early telephone tutorials led to certain frequently repeated comments in the students' evaluation:

- At least a programme for the session, if not detailed notes and questions, should be distributed in advance of the tutorials.
- Reassurance may need to be given in initial tutorials that early unease is soon resolved.
- Such a strategy is enhanced when used after the majority of students have already met, for example at a weekend school or residential school.
- These tutorials were considered valuable when conducted prior to an examination or major assessment.
- Factors such as group size will need to be monitored.

The change in response offered by students participating in the one series of three tutorials (36203) could be most helpful in evaluating the tutorials generally. This compares with the majority of responses offered after only one telephone tutorial experience. There it may be seen that a sense of affinity and a lessening of hesitancy in participation developed over time.

If there can be an accurate absorption of all the comment offered by these participants, it would appear that a series of telephone tutorials is favoured, and possibly they could be scheduled - and announced well in advance - to emphasise (say) course review at one, assignment at another, and difficulties in review of the course.

It does appear that, in terms of the subject area under discussion and physical characteristics of the equipment used, there could be optimum group sizes - overall, and in the local setting.

T.A. (Tim) Fishburn
Senior Reserch Officer

25.3.83

36203 ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN'S SPECIAL NEEDS

(PETER HALLINAN)

. FIRST TUTORIAL

OVERALL REACTION

Nineteen of the twenty students responding to the evaluation survey offered an overall rating for the first tutorial. Responses ranged from a tentative scale 1, settling for 2, through all other scales to 5: mean 4.2. The one student respondent who did not offer a formal scaled response spoke of the experience as being '...worthwhile...'.

(19)

STRENGTHS

Most student respondents referred to a number of features; the majority, however, referred solely or primarily to the contact with lecturer/fellow students and the clarification of questions/problems.

Of the twenty respondents, somewhat better than half (11) spoke of the contact provided by the tutorial, particularly the sharing experience of discussion with fellow students. Also mentioned were the contact with the lecturer - particularly the opportunity so posed for immediate reaction and response on his part - and the reduction such contact effected in feelings of isolation ('...not alone...'; '...only a 'phone call away...'; etc.). One respondent also referred to the test such contact provided of his/her keeping up with the subject.

Again, better than half of the respondents (11) - including many of those discussed above - mentioned the opportunity so presented to ask questions to clarify areas, often problems areas, in particular those relating to assignments.

Two spoke highly of the tutor's method One of introducing discussion to start the tutorial working; and the other of his referring to individual students throughout.

Another two students mentioned the motivation posed by the contact through the tutorial, either through its forcing preparation or its resolution of problems.

As mentioned, one raised the timing of the tutorial, in its forcing work through preparation.

(20)

WEAKNESSES

Three respondents expressly stated that they saw no weaknesses in the tutorial.

But clearly the major criticism of the first teleturoial was directed at technical factors (11). Respondents spoke of crossed lines, faintness of reception, and other technical problems intruding and disturbing their involvement in the tutorial.

In all, four student respondents spoke adversely of the (local) group size;

two specifying nine as being too large. One suggested that a larger group - size unknown - would have had major difficulty in participation because of the technical difficulties.

Two respondents suggested that there was not enough time; another that he/she felt 'rushed'; yet another that the topic was too wide for the time allotted.

Another two criticised the tutor: One criticised there being no obvious format to the tutorial; the other (as already mentioned) that the topic area was too broad for the time allowed.

(19)

IMPROVEMENTS

Of the eighteen participants who responded to this first review, seven restated areas of previously expressed 'weakness'. Eight others posed areas of 'improvement' they had not previously nominated at 'weaknesses', but which fit within the basic frame of that response.

Drawing such response together reveals

- seven participant students sought format changes, making suggestions such as the use of participants; questions to define the topic for discussion rather than have these imposed (4), and the provision of time for participants to raise teaching difficulties for the lecturer's input (1);
- five respondents sought improvement in technical aspects;
- three suggested smaller group size - less than nine (1) or no more than six (1);
- also proposed were longer (2) and more frequent sessions (1).

Three respondents suggested that there was no area warranting improvement.

(18)

OTHER COMMENTS

Eleven participants offered 'other comments' after this first tutorial.

Six of these offered very favourable summary comment: 'worthwhile exercise', 'enjoyable and beneficial', 'great idea .. should be more', etc. Two then extended such comment, one referring to the possible need for less time for residential school attendance, and the other of the value of such a method particularly for those who had lost confidence in studying over the years.

Two spoke of technical problems. One anticipated that the major difficulties would be overcome next time. The other suggested - as opposed to the directions in thenotes to let the tutor know - that, in the event of experiencing a crossed line, the participant hang up.

The format of the tutorial was raised again. One referred to the need for all to participate; another that specific topics - not the chapters (?) - be set as the basis of the tutorial; and one participant suggested the involvement of another particular lecturer (in addition?).

Another group size was raised: It being suggested that there be even smaller groups, of two or three (1).

In addition, two of the respondents referred to an assignment. One student expressed certain confusion at this point over the assignment; the other pointed to its length and complexity, and his/her view that the study material was confusing. (11)

36203 ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN"S SPECIAL NEEDS

(PETER HALLINAN)

. SECOND TUTORIAL

OVERALL REACTION

Of the eighteen students responding to the second evaluation survey - that after the second telephone tutorial - only fifteen offered a rating as 'overall reaction'; in addition though, two respondents from comments offered might fairly have been interpretted as offering the top rating 5.

On average, the second tutorial drew a rating of 4.6 (whether including or not the two specifically mentioned as offering no rating). Eight of these ratings were above those offered by the respondents to the first evaluation; only one was lower than that offered in the first survey.

(15)

STRENGTHS

As with the first set of responses, the survey after the second tutorial drew comments under 'strengths' relating primarily to the resolution of problems, difficulties, or queries - particularly those relating to assignments (12). The second most frequently mentioned area under this heading was the contact so posed with lecturer and/or fellow students (5); some of these leading from discussion to the resolution of problem/ difficulty/query (2).

Two spoke of the group size as being appropriate - referring, it is assumed, not of the overall tutorial group, but that at the setting. One considered that the tutor showed evidence of a format for the tutorial. One other - extending a comment of resolving problems - spoke of the tutorial removing a feeling of isolation.

A few respondents discussed the resolution of technical problems in this tutorial.

One offered no response under this heading.

(17)

WEAKNESSES

Only five of the eighteen respondents to this survey offered criticism, as 'weaknesses' in this second tutorial; eight other respondents stated that there were no 'weaknesses'.

All five respondents suggesting that there were 'weaknesses' referred to technical problems: Two mentioned difficulty hearing, including fading lines; another two mentioned having difficulty being connected to the tutorial.

One of the five referred to the tutor's/students' inadequate cueing, leading to one speaking over another.

(13)

IMPROVEMENTS

Only five respondents to the second survey offered any comment at this

point in the instrument.

Two referred to need for technical 'improvements'; three said that there were no areas of improvement needed.

(5)

OTHER COMMENTS

In all, ten of these participants contributed comment at this final stage of the survey.

Four respondents offered favourable summary comment; three went further to qualify such remarks. One referred to the success being due to the lecturer's patience and encouragement; another suggested that once the technical problems were overcome that the tutorial would assist, particularly, those who were isolated from other group members; and the third, that the idea would be well applied to other units.

One referred to the previously experienced technical problems as being largely overcome in this tutorial, leading to clearer reception and better participation.

Other comments offered included a further call for smaller group size, suggesting no more than five participants; another expressed preference for the tutorial's format being based on expressions of difficulty experience, rather than spending time on answers already given; and one respondent suggested that the tutorials were proving to be more helpful than a lot of what happens at residential schools.

One respondent made a personal appeal for the timing of the next tutorial .. as she was going away for her holidays!

Finally, one student took up a particular issue from within the coursework of the unit.

(10)

36203 ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN'S SPECIAL NEEDS

(PETER HALLINAN)

. THIRD TUTORIAL

OVERALL REACTION

Only nine participants in the third tutorial offered a clear formal rating as to their 'overall reaction'; two others offered comment which could only be interpretted as 'extremely favourable'. The ratings offered average 4.3.

(11)

STRENGTHS

Variants on the effect of contact with lecturer and/or fellow students were the major aspects of response to this third review (7). Beyond the sense of affinity that one reported having developed over the sequence of tutorials, was the opportunity another raised in being able to 'talk something over'; to measure the application of the aspect in question to teaching (1); and to place one's uncertainty in the context of that expressed by others (1). Two suggested that the tutorial relieved a sense of isolation.

Four respondents spoke (or then spoke) of the tutorial resolving queries or problems. What was interesting in this response - relating almost certainly to the timing of the tutorial - was the reference (by 3) to queries relating to study notes or the module of work to be done, not - as was the case in the other two tutorials - to assignments!

One spoke of the tutor's covering all topics, which is assumed to relate to some previously distributed tutorial material. Another spoke of the tutor's summation of questions and answers. The lecturer rated as an 'A+' tutor by one respondent.

Again, one respondent spoke of being forced to prepare at least those aspects of the course covered by the tutorial.

(11)

In addition to the eleven completed survey instruments, one other respondent wrote a brief letter which spoke very highly of the tutorials.

WEAKNESSES

All eleven respondents offered comment under this heading; three that they saw no weaknesses in the third tutorial.

The other eight, however, referred to technical problems: Four mentioned fading volume generally; one that she could not be heard, and another that she could not hear her. One of these eight also mentioned delayed connection to the tutorial.

(11)

IMPROVEMENTS

Only two of the five participants responding to this question after the third tutorial considered that 'improvements' were needed: One referred to technical factors; the other to the group size, suggesting that there be no more than five lines open at any tutorial.

Three respondents said that there were no improvements warranted.

(5)

OTHER COMMENTS

Eight of the participants took the opportunity to offer comment at this final stage in the final survey.

Given the earlier reactions, and the now reported better receiption, it should not be surprising to know that the bulk of comment (7) was most complimentary to the lecturer and the teletutorials. Many comments were repetitions of comment provided in earlier surveys, although here three offered thanks for the opportunity to participate in the trial.

One student respondent suggested that the telephone tutorial 'filled in the gaps' after residential schools.

Another student expressed the wish to participate in an evaluation of the Diploma in Special Education Course in a teleconference.

(8)

36203 ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN'S SPECIAL NEEDS

(PETER HALLINAN)

SUMMARY OF TUTORIALS

NOTE that three tutorials were conducted for this Unit and that each was separately evaluated by student response, using the same instrument.

RESPONSE

Twenty (20) students participating in the first tutorial responded to the evaluation survey. Eighteen (18) of these respondents returned the questionaire after the second tutorial. But by the third, only eleven (11) had completed whole or part of the returned instrument; in addition one student wrote, referring positively to the tutorials, but explaining that moving house had restricted later responses.

OVERALL REACTION

It is interesting to compare the nature of change in response as 'overall reaction' over the three tutorials.

Where there was a falling off in response overall, there was also a falling off over the three measures of the response to this question: Nineteen (19) completed the question in the initial survey, then seventeen (17); finally ten (10). Certain letters were also written in lieu of the questionaire, generally referring to its having been misplaced.

Comparing the individuals' three responses to this measure showed a minor increase or a holding in rating. Certain respondents offered a lower rating: One offered a lower rating in the second response (with no third response), indicating, in criticism, technical problems; and two respondents lowered their rating from the second to third (both after an increase in rating from first to second), aslo referring in criticism to technical problems.

STRENGTHS

Looking at the three sets of response, it is evident that the contact provided by the teletutorial - bring with it the resoluation of queries, often problems, both by the tutor and via discussion within the group, and the reduction in the sense of isolation - was the major strength identified. Clearly, the timing of the tutorial influences whether assignments dominate discussion.

WEAKNESSES

Technical problems were the most frequently mentioned 'weakness', although they appear to have been largely overcome over the sequence of tutorials.

Aspect of format, cueing, and inexperience with the telephone tutorial method also appear to have been resolved over the three sessions.

IMPROVEMENTS

Generally, 'improvements' nominated covered the resolution of 'weaknesses' (also, generally nominated) and the extention of 'strengths'.

36203/SUMMARY OF TUTORIALS (cont'd.)

OTHER COMMENTS

Over the three reviews, although the response fell away, the favourable comments and appreciation dominated.

Certain, often single suggestions - for example those relating to residential schools, involvement of other staff, and extending the tutorial to that of a conference covering the course - warrant further examination.

82322 MONEY AND BANKING: THEORY AND POLICY

(GREG WALKER)

OVERALL REACTION

The three 'overall reaction' ratings offered by respondents averaged 4.7.

STRENGTHS

One respondent spoke favourably of the tutor's calling on individual respondents, rather than to leave questions open to response; which may have led to the comment that participants were more prepared to listen (1).

The third respondent referred to the advantage of sharing ideas and the instant 'feedback' such a strategy allows (1).

Another favourable comment made was the reduction in travelling time to attend (1).

(3)

WEAKNESSES

Two of the respondents mentioned technical difficulties, particularly the difficulty of hearing.

One participant considered the tutorial not to have the same degree of involvement as the classroom setting.

(3)

IMPROVEMENTS

Only two of the three respondents added comment at this point, both building on their comments under the 'weaknesses' heading: One spoke of the need for better equipment, and added the request that a list of names of participants be made available (in sufficient time) in advance, and that they be more detailed.

(2)

OTHER COMMENTS

One respondent pointed to a lower level of distracting queries and detailed responses, thus allowing for a greater volume of work to be covered.

Another of these respondents was so taken with the tutorial strategy that he/she suggested their being held more often, particularly early in the semester - going on to suggest one hour per month.

The third respondent pointed to the difficulty (in his/her case) of holding the 'phone, writing notes, and consulting references, suggesting that tutorials be held earlier, taped, and a summary printed for distribution.

28210 RESEARCH SKILLS AND REPORT WRITING / 31403 READING AND STUDY SKILLS

(ROD ALLAN, CAROL HARMAN and BOB HILL)
OVERALL REACTION

Ratings offered by the ten participants responding to the evaluation survey ranged from 3 to 5: Average 4.3.

STRENGTHS

All ten respondents offered some form of compliment to the tutorial; generally such comments could be summarised as effecting closer contact with lecturers, students.

Three respondents spoke of an improved teacher/student relationship brought about by the tutorial method. One suggested (as a strength) that students tended to ask more questions than in the classroom setting.

Another three respondents referred to closer contact with lecturers and fellow students; one that the tutorial allowed the student to see himself/herself in the context of the group. One of these three added that the method allowed joint student involvement in studies.

Six of the ten spoke of the resolution of questions/problems, and the timing of the tutorial: that such contact allowed for the clarification of questions (3), the resolution of problems (1), and the value of timing, particularly in relation to assignment preparation (2).

(10)

WEAKNESSES

Of the ten respondents, all but one referred initially to technical factors, principally the lack of sufficient volume.

One of these respondents spoke of difficulty in using notes/papers, due to the low volume, and the need for the group to congregate close to the speaker.

Two of those complaining of technical problems also criticised the lecturers or the format of the tutorial. One respondent simply expressed preference for a lecture format; the other criticised the rapid movement between topics.

Another two respondents spoke of those (students) who did not attend the telephone tutorials.

(10)

IMPROVEMENTS

All but one of these respondents offered comment at this point; one in three of these referred to the need for some form of tutorial programme (3) to lead participants through the tutorial and allow their organisation of notes (1), and to avoid rapid changes of subject (1). One other respondent cosidered that there could have been too much material covered.

Two respondents suggested that such sessions would improve as participants gained further experience with the method.

Two students made suggestions about the starting time (6.30-7.00pm and 7.00pm) because of personal factors of work commitments.

One respondent was particularly critical of technical factors, such as equipment and starting times/connections.

(9)

OTHER COMMENTS

Various comments made by respondents under 'improvements' were repeated by others under this heading: further criticism of technical factors (2); the need for some form of programme for the tutorial (1); and how greater experience of the strategy will lead to improved use of the tutorials (1).

One participant spoke of the value of the tutorial/timing in clarifying requirements for assignments and the examination; another suggested another tutorial about a week before the examination.

Finally, one student sought more notice of the tutorial dates/times, because of work rosters.

(7)

80101 ACCOUNTING I

(BRIAN HANLEY)

OVERALL REACTION

All six respondents offered a rating as 'overall reaction'. Ranging from 3 to 5, the response averaged 3.5.

STRENGTHS

Five of the six respondents saw strengths in the telephone tutorial. Four of these referred to the tutorial method: its creating a 'lecture room' setting (10; its being appropriate in further developing certain non numeric concepts (1); and the discussion so initiated(2). One other respondent referred to the contact between the lecturer and student so provided.

One respondent saw strength in the method's resolving students' problems.

(5)

WEAKNESSES

The majority of student respondents (3) made reference to the telephone medium as the major area of weakness; principally its lacking visual cues.

Two complained of technical problems.

Two other students offered criticism of the lecturer: speech being too fast (2), particularly when answering questions; time wasted waiting for students to ask questions (1); and not making the students' questions more generally applicable(1).

Criticism was also offered (1) of the lack of preparation, by students, of their questions.

(6)

IMPROVEMENTS

Two respondents drew on their comments under 'weaknesses': one spoke of the tutor's speaking too quickly and not making individual student's questions more generally applicable; the other expressed need for certain printed material to act as a visual cue, particularly for numerical examples. This latter respondent went on to suggest value in there being examples set before the students to be completed during the tutorial.

Of the other two respondents, one suggested that distribution of programme material (setting two or three examples as being sufficient).

One respondent (living and working in Newcastle) suggested the need for a tutorial centre in Newcastle.

(4)

OTHER COMMENTS

The two comments made were that there were not sufficient students present (1) and - extending a comment made under 'weaknesses' - that accounting is better suited to 'face-to-face' teaching (1).

(2)

These respondents were also asked where they lived/worked and the time it took to attend the tutorial and return. Two respondents travelled from Newcastle (two to two and a half hours each way); two from suburban settings (sixty to eighty minutes total); and two came from work settings in the city (five to ten minutes being nominated).

50

83114 ECONOMICS IB

(GREG WALKER)

OVERALL REACTION

All three participating students offered the tutorial an 'overall reaction' rating of 3.

STRENGTHS

Two of the three respondents spoke of the advantage so posed of making contact with the lecturer (2) and students (1). One of these went on to speak of the advantage of a small group and how the contact provided 'food for thought' in certain areas.

The third student respondent spoke of the tutorial's clarifying certain areas of the course.

(3)

WEAKNESSES

All three respondents spoke of technical difficulties.

One respondent added that discussion material had not arrived in time and that the session was not long enough.

(3)

IMPROVEMENTS

Only one of the three student respondents offered a comment at this point, seeking more participants for better interaction.

(1)

OTHER COMMENTS

Of the three who made comment under this heading, one suggested a maximum of five students (which is rather in contrast to the suggestion of a fellow participant repeated immediately above). The other two comments - both coming from students seeing value in the strategy - might be seen to be a touch flippant : '...ending up with a sore ear...' (1) and '... dinner went cold ...' (1).

(3)

83321 THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL SYSTEM

(GREG WALKER)

OVERALL REACTION

All four respondents offered the maximum rating 5 as an indication of their 'overall reaction'.

STRENGTHS

All four student respondents spoke highly of the telephone tutorial.

Two spoke specifically of the telephone strategy of tutorial: one, that it has advantages over physical attendance by avoiding conflicting interests; the other referred to greater participation than in the class setting (arguing that restricted means of communication - voice only - induces this).

Two spoke of the value of this contact with other students:one, that it allows discussion of current issues in specialised areas within the field; the other spoke of the stimulation of the (revised) contact. This latter respondent touched on the aspect of timing, in this case after the residential school. One other respondent spoke of its reinforcing earlier contact and thus that it provides for better interaction in the tutorial. Another aspect of timing raised was in the comment of the summarising of the course to date, which allows identification of areas 'missed'. (1).

(4)

WEAKNESSES

The major area of criticism raised by these student respondents was their not being advised in advanced of the area of discussion to be covered (2).

One referred to the format of the session, specifically not knowing when to ask questions.

One of these respondents also referred to technical problems.

(3)

IMPROVEMENTS

Two of the three respondents who nominated areas of improvements they would like to see in any subsequent telephone tutorial referred to their earlier comments on the need for at least an outline of what is to be discussed; and the third respondent added virtually the same point.

(3)

OTHER COMMENTS

All four respondents offered comment at this point.

One alluded to an initial hesitancy, speaking of gaining experience and enjoyment with participation; one suggested a maximum group size of twelve (whether as a maximum for the tutorial overall or the centre however was not clear); and the third suggested that there was value in participants meeting prior to the tutorial.

The fourth respondent saw particular value in the tutorials' being held before (he/she suggested, each) assignment.

(4)

83211 MICROECONOMICS II

(TERRY GEDDES)

OVERALL REACTION

The average 'overall reaction' rating offered by the two respondents to the review was 3.5.

STRENGTHS

The two student respondents spoke of the contact with lecturer (1) and students (2).

Where one referred to the relief of feelings of isolation and the motivation provided through such contact, the other mentioned the contact it provides the student/views not necessarily represented at weekend schools.

(2)

WEAKNESSES

The major areas of criticism offered by these two respondents were that the tutorial was not long enough (1), and that he/she was not prepared - and thus not able to prepare - for this type of tutorial and the subject area (1).

Each respondent added another area of criticism: The first that such a medium could be inappropriate with too many students participating; the second referred to technical difficulties.

(2)

IMPROVEMENTS

Both respondents suggested improvements they would like to see in any subsequent telephone tutorial. One extended a previously raised weakness relating to the lack of preparation for students, suggesting that student participants should at least have the opportunity to prepare questions they might wish to raise; the other respondent raised similar criticism, suggesting the distribution of a topic list in advance of the tutorial.

(2)

OTHER COMMENTS

One extended the theme of need for preparation by suggesting value in students meeting at the tutorial centre for a time before the commencement of the tutorial (prefixed: 'If the weekend school is unavailable...').

The other respondent praised the initiative, particularly for country students.

(2)

83112 MACROECONOMICS I AND 83115 ECONOMICS 11B

(JOHN BURGESS)

OVERALL REACTION

The 'overall reaction' ratings offered by respondents to the tutorial averaged 3.9.

STRENGTHS

All eight respondents nominated strengths identified in their experience of the telephone tutorial.

The contact with fellow students was mentioned (3), particularly in its overcoming feelings of remoteness (1), hearing others' views (2), and gaining an idea of one's progress in relation to others (1).

The immediacy thereby allowed in questions asked an answered was raised (1), as was the aspect of the tutorial's resolving problem areas or 'gaps' (3). The tutor was complimented for ensuring that problems were resolved before he proceeded (1).

One respondent referred to the early delivery of notes, thus allowing for preparation; another suggested he/she was thus prompted to work where otherwise such work might not have been undertaken.

The timing of the tutorial - particularly in relation to the early residential school - was seen as a strength, in terms of its review function (1).

(8)

WEAKNESSES

The major areas of weakness offered by these student respondents were technical (3), or related to the small group size (3).

Two respondents referred to the tutor's presentation: one (who also encountered technical problems) was critical of questions being directed to centres in sequence; the other, that topics should have been covered in greater depth.

One referred to there being no visual cues, and that concentrating on hearing was stressful.

(8)

IMPROVEMENTS

Five of the seven respondents who nominated improvements they saw applying to future tutorials merely restated what they saw as weaknesses: Two saw need to increase attendance/participation; one saw need to imrpove technical aspects of reception; one suggested the need to concentrate more on a lesser division of the course; and one saw improvement in his/her not attending such tutorials!

The two respondents who did not merely draw upon an earlier comment referred to the need to restrict the group size to less than twenty (1) and for students to identify themselves (1).

(7)

OTHER COMMENTS

Two respondents were critical of what they saw as inadequate directions to the tutorial setting (at NSWIT); one of these respondents spoke also of the value of the timing, being just before the examination. Other comments covered the need for improved equipment (suggesting a larger speaker (1)), and the value seen in more regular telephone tutorials (1).

One respondent spoke of his/her initial hesitancy, which soon passed and led to active and enthusiastic participation (1).

26101 COMPARATIVE INSTITUTIONS

(DON WYATT)

OVERALL REACTION

The two participants offered a mean rating of 4.5 as their 'overall reaction' to the teletutorial.

STRENGTHS

The two student repondents spoke favourably of the tutorial method, particularly the advantages of discussion. One found the telephone tutorial less inhibiting than the class room, with greater involvement resulting. The other found the discussion integrating (what to him/her were otherwise isolated) topics.

The respondent who found the method less inhibiting to discussion also found the timing of the tutorial - close before examinations, with the opportunity for discussion - valuable.

(2)

WEAKNESSES

Both respondents referred to technical difficulties; one suggesting further that the speaker 'phone facility would be insufficient with a large number of participants.

(2)

IMPROVEMENTS

Neither of these two respondents referred back to the weaknesses they had outlined. Each wanted to see more telephone tutorials, although these two respondents differed as to their timing. The common requirement does, however, seem to be more tutorials, each covering less (possibly geared to the forthcoming residential school, significant assignments, etc.).

One respondent also suggested that the group of student participants be kept small and that each should introduce himself/herself and their location.

(2)

OTHER COMMENTS

As one of the respondents spoke of frequency of tutorials, such comment has been included under the previous heading.

The second respondent pointed to the difficulty in finding the tutorial setting (at NSWIT) and sought better instructions and a map.

(2)